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Joint Education: Where Do We Go From Here?

By WILLIAM M. STEELE AND ROBERT B. KUPISZEWSKI

When Congress enacted the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act, few could have imagined the eventual impact it would have on military education. The act fundamentally changed the way intermediate and senior colleges approach Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)

by redressing the balance between service and joint educational needs. The accomplishments of Goldwater-Nichols in this field are many and varied and include Joint Specialty Officer (JSO) education, joint officer development goals, joint educational accreditation, and increased interaction among the service colleges. While the law

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Seven years of reform in the wake of the Goldwater-Nichols Act have energized curricula at intermediate and senior colleges while redressing the balance between service and joint educational needs. The two-phase Program for Joint Education is efficiently moving officers into joint duty billets as faculty and student attitudes toward joint matters undergo a metamorphosis. Overall reform seems to be paying off as evidenced by the performance of the Armed Forces in Desert Storm. But the colleges cannot afford to rest on their laurels. It is time to look beyond Goldwater-Nichols and take steps to expand the use of doctrine in the classroom, streamline the Joint Specialty Officer educational process, institute an automated interlibrary system, create common joint scenarios for teaching, and amend the Joint Duty Assignment List.

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has achieved its purpose, a systemic review of the joint educational process that has evolved is called for. This review should ensure continued progress in developing officers with expertise in service capabilities and joint warfighting. This article documents the progress made and offers some suggestions that can increase excellence of JPME as seen from the intermediate college level perspective.

Toward Goldwater-Nichols

The failure of the April 1980 mission to rescue the American hostages held by Iran helped set the stage for the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Desert One reinforced doubts among many members of the Congress, defense establishment, and military over the ability of the services to operate in a joint environment. At the heart of the controversy was whether an adequate organizational structure existed to carry out joint operations on short notice around the globe.¹

In the aftermath of Desert One two seminal articles on defense reorganization appeared in *Armed Forces Journal International*. One, entitled “Why the Joint Chiefs of Staff Must Change,” was by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David C. Jones. The other, “The JCS: How Much Reform is Needed?,” was by the Army’s Chief of Staff, General Edward C. Meyer. These articles called for institutional change and helped bring about hearings by the Investigations Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee and pave the way for Goldwater-Nichols.

A primary purpose of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation was to strengthen the position of the Chairman as well as the commanders in chief of the unified combatant commands. Congress believed that this would eliminate many of the problems identified in the aftermath of Desert One. The act changed

the ways in which DOD and the services managed the careers of officers assigned to joint duty. Title IV of the Goldwater-Nichols Act dealt with joint officer personnel policy and specifically required the Secretary of Defense “to establish policies, procedures and practices to develop and manage joint specialty officers who are particularly trained in, and oriented toward, joint matters.” In addition, it also required service colleges to intensify their focus on joint matters and the preparation of officers for joint duty assignments.

Title IV was originally intended to provide policy for JSO personnel management. But it was extended beyond that purpose through the efforts of Congressman Ike Skelton, a member of the House Armed Services Committee. He believed that in order for the services to develop high quality JSOs, a strong joint educational system had to be created together with effective personnel management practices. Due to this interest, Mr. Skelton was appointed to chair a panel on military education to assess the capability of the Professional Military Education (PME) system to produce officers competent in both military strategy and joint matters.

The Skelton Panel

The Panel on Military Education of the House Armed Services Committee—also known as the Skelton Panel—began work in 1987. With the help of the institutions concerned, the panel reviewed education at all intermediate and senior colleges. The initial visit was to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where the panel members met with faculty and students and heard testimony from the college’s leaders. Repeating this process at each college, the panel gathered data that led to publication in April 1989 of a comprehensive report on military education. The report made a number of recommendations that had a significant impact on PME.² Among the most radical was a proposed two-phase JSO educational process. Phase I would provide students at intermediate and senior service colleges with expertise in multiservice matters which the panel believed officers of all services must understand. Phase II would provide a *hands on* course to teach the integrated deployment and employment of joint forces. This second

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phase would be offered to students on temporary duty at the Armed Forces Staff College (AFSC) in Norfolk, Virginia. Congress responded by mandating a two-phase JSO education process.

Implementation

Responding to a recommendation of the panel, the Chairman created a Director of Military Education as a member of the Joint Staff in 1989. One of the first tasks of the Military Education Division (J-7), Joint Staff, was to prepare the documentation to develop and execute a JSO education program. A memorandum was issued in May 1990 to provide that policy.³ It was then revised and issued as CM-1618-93, *Military Education Policy Document*, in March 1993 which specified the three elements of a two-phase JSO educational concept:

- ▼ an educational development framework with goals for officers of every service, from pre-commissioning to flag rank

- ▼ specific learning objectives: basic joint knowledge taught at intermediate service colleges (phase I) and application of that knowledge at AFSC (phase II)

- ▼ an accreditation process to assure program goals to be met by each service.

Using this guidance the service colleges and AFSC set about implementing the two-phase program—or Program for Joint Education (PJE)—during academic year 1990–91.

Initial PJE development and other aspects of JPME were closely monitored by the House panel. The General Accounting Office (GAO), which reviewed PJE implementation, concluded in a 1991 report that the services were taking positive action to meet the spirit and intent of the panel's recommendations.⁴ Congressman Skelton subsequently held several hearings to follow up on the GAO's findings which also confirmed that progress was being achieved in the field of PJE.

Joint Progress

The most important evidence of PJE progress is the increase and strengthening of joint curricula that has occurred across the military educational community. Prior to Goldwater-Nichols most institutions regarded jointness as a separate discipline normally

taught by one department. Today service colleges consider joint education as an integrated subject area that cuts across every warfighting discipline. For example, at the Command and General Staff School (CGSS) which is part of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, all five of its academic departments have joint learning objectives embedded in their courses. The joint lessons support PJE phase I and constitute about one-third of its core curriculum. In addition, each end of course after-action review includes an assessment of how the course supports PJE.

Progress also has been made by adjusting the interservice mix of faculty and students. Since the start of academic year 1993–94, for instance, CGSS has had one air and one sea service officer in each of its 80

seminars. This is a major increase over the 40 air and 16 sea service officers who attended the school in 1986. Similarly, all the other intermediate service colleges—including

the College of Naval Command and Staff at Newport, Rhode Island; Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama; and Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Quantico, Virginia—have increased their overall sister service student bodies to 55, 90, and 26, respectively. A better faculty mix has also brought diverse skills and experiences to the service colleges.

One important reason for creating a joint culture is to shape new attitudes and perspectives. Through a better joint mix of both students and faculty members, the educational environment at the service colleges has changed. Learning activities no longer have a single service perspective. Seminar discussions and college exercises now benefit from the ideas and opinions of officers of all services as well as the expertise of civilians and international officers. This has changed the way graduates think about the profession of arms, their sister services, and joint warfare.

Prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, colleges taught jointness based on self-defined service needs. There was no coordinated joint education program that provided all officers with a common understanding of joint matters. But today PJE phase I ensures

that graduates of both intermediate and senior colleges share a basic joint knowledge and common understanding of joint operations. Similarly, phase II at AFSC increases the understanding of joint operations. Each phase enhances joint planning and cooperation in the field and fleet—where theory is translated into practice.

Progress has also been made with regard to standards. Before 1986 little policy existed to guide joint standards at service colleges. JCS Memorandum 189–84, “Joint Professional Military Education Policy Document,” offered guidance but lacked focus to meet the provisions of title IV.⁵ CM-1618–93 is a significant step forward for joint standards. It contains common learning objectives, sister service student and faculty mixes, student-to-faculty ratios, and institutional standards for measuring program effects. As a result the colleges now have uniform benchmarks to plan joint educational programs and requirements which apply to all service colleges and to the National Defense University (NDU).

The PJE accreditation process represents another major step forward. It provides a formal review process that ensures service colleges are meeting specified standards and achieving program goals and objectives. Modeled after civilian college accreditation programs, PJE accreditation is a peer-review system that takes place at least once every four years. A key benefit of accreditation is that institutions conduct self-studies of how to plan, execute, and evaluate PJE programs. This can take up to a year to complete and is a challenging and healthy experience. Both self-evaluation and accreditation demand a comprehensive internal review based on external standards. Accreditation is a significant development for PME because it provides common standards against which all the colleges can be measured.

Another area of significance is the increasing interaction within the PME community. The best example is found in the revitalized Military Education Coordination Conference (MECC) that meets twice a year. These events are chaired by the Director of the Joint Staff and attended by the presidents and commandants of the intermediate

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and senior colleges. It is a forum for discussing important educational issues. In recent years, the MECC agenda has been keyed to subjects related to enhancing joint education at service colleges, although other critical topics are featured including academic freedom, ethics, and technology. In addition to the MECC, J-7 often hosts conferences to provide the colleges with a vehicle for discussing problems and developing common solutions. One such conference was recently held at NDU to review space operations and their role in combat operations. This event was attended by members of the colleges, space community, and services, and provided an opportunity to share ideas on how space issues can be integrated into curricula. Other conferences have focused on command and control and on library interconnectivity.

The Payoff

PJE improvements are meaningless if graduates cannot perform effectively on the job. The real proof of progress is whether graduates have the skills and knowledge to work as a joint team in combat. Operation Desert Storm provided our first major test. The result was a clear validation of the principles espoused by Goldwater-Nichols. Victory in the Gulf War demonstrated that the services and joint community were accomplishing their educational mission. We have come a long way from Desert One to Desert Storm. While PJE deserves much of the credit, we must continue to improve joint

education. How do we sustain progress yet take joint education to higher levels of excellence? The joint community and services must work together to answer this

question or progress will atrophy. On-going initiatives focus on joint doctrine, enhancements to PJE phases I and II, a Joint School of Advanced Military Studies (JSAMS), interconnectivity of library assets, common teaching scenarios, and the Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL). These are only a few of the issues that must be addressed if we are to sustain the gains made to date in PJE.

The key to joint education is joint doctrine. It is the foundation of the educational

process and curricula. Without a complete body of joint doctrine the service colleges are handicapped and must teach solely from experience rather than a sound doctrinal foundation. A class discussion on joint operations without available doctrinal publications is like attending a school that does not have any books—the discussion may be lively but rarely substantive. Until joint doctrine is published and fully integrated into college curricula, JPME will be taught from individual service perspectives and never attain its potential. A study of joint operations must be doctrinally based. The intent of PJE—as well as that of Mr. Skelton and the other members of the Panel on Military Education—cannot be met without publication of a complete edition of joint doctrinal manuals.

Feedback from many quarters revealed shortcomings in PJE phases I and II that must be addressed to increase effectiveness and efficiency. The on-going J-7 review of this important area is essential to deconflicting curricula between the two phases. One key problem with a two-phase process is overlap. This is the case on the intermediate level partly because the PJE design calls for teaching joint *knowledge* in phase I, followed by the *application* of that knowledge in phase II.

Most intermediate service colleges teach subjects, particularly joint subject matter, at a level of learning beyond knowledge. The requirement to integrate and embed jointness in curricula has dictated that the resulting instruction be at a higher level, usually the application level of learning. Most intermediate colleges believe that every student—not just those going on to phase II—need more than a basic knowledge of joint operations. At CGSS, for example, the curriculum includes application-level study of deploying and employing a joint task force as the capstone exercise to the academic year. All students participate because they all require a thorough understanding of joint operations. This overlaps with phase II curricula which also teach joint task force operations.

This positive aspect of redundancy in joint curricula provides an opportunity to enhance the learning experience in phases I and II and links both curricula. It is, however, important to identify areas of overlap and sort out curricula to eliminate unnecessary redundancy. Thorough audits of curricula will reveal that we are shortchanging

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is joint doctrine

phase I service colleges on PJE. Audit results will show that the length of phase II at AFSC can be reduced by simply giving credit to service colleges for subjects being taught at phase II standards. The payoff will be a reduction in the time required to meet phase II requirements which will benefit each service college. This could be done without forcing additional joint subjects into service college core curricula. In any case, improving the JSO two-phase concept is a challenge that must be resolved.

The first step in reviewing the two-phase concept should be a comprehensive audit of PJE learning objectives and curricular overlap. This will involve analyses of PJE learning objectives to ensure they focus on skills JSOs need to perform. It will also require reviewing where objectives should be taught (in phase I or II, or both) and at what level (knowledge or application). The key is focus on the desired levels of competence to be achieved at the intermediate and senior colleges as well as the unique differences between them.

Another timely idea is to create a Joint School for Advanced Military Studies or JSAMS. In a journal article Congressman Skelton suggested creating a one-year intermediate level JSAMS course under the auspices of NDU. He pointed out that such a course would provide the Chairman and unified commanders with a pool of officers well grounded in the planning and conduct of joint operations.⁶ As envisioned JSAMS would include 60 officers (20 from each military department) and be offered in addition to similar programs of the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

The Army SAMS program has fostered similar curricula in both the Marine Corps and Air Force. These service oriented courses have proven their worth over the years. All have promoted better understanding of operational art in their respective services while simultaneously producing exceptionally well qualified operational level planners. The courses focus on intermediate service college students in the rank of major/lieutenant commander. The curricula approach operational art from unique service perspectives with joint operations a necessary by-product of the education.

To build on this foundation of operational art, a JSAMS should be the next logical step in the education process. There are, however, two problems with this model. First, service-unique programs should not be sacrificed or modified to achieve JPME objectives and standards. Existing programs have served the services well and each should maintain a service-unique perspective on operational art. Second, although a JSAMS is needed, focusing on the intermediate level will not yield the greatest payoff. Rather, focusing on the senior service college level for JSAMS would enhance joint professional development and provide more experienced campaign planners.

Along similar lines several senior colleges are addressing the need for increased education related to preparing and executing campaign plans. A JSAMS would be an excellent way to meet that need. Because theater campaign planning is inherently joint, a JSAMS could create a student and faculty mix to develop and execute plans in a truly joint learning environment. A senior-level JSAMS would produce graduates—lieutenant colonels or colonels/commanders or captains—who would be available for repetitive assignments as joint planners for the balance of their careers.

The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College has begun a curriculum to increase campaign planning in its two-year advanced operational studies fellowship, a senior service college program. This enhancement extends the current course 6 months and includes 24 to 30 months of regionally focused courses. In the first phase, students receive a foundation in military theory, history, and strategy. Regional travel, exercises, and languages are also included in the first year. In the second phase the focus is on campaign planning across the range of joint operations, going beyond the study of generic campaign design to the individual preparation of comprehensive campaign plans (the overall curriculum devotes approximately 350 hours to planning). End results are turned over to skilled practitioners assigned to unified commands and contribute to our body of knowledge on joint operations.

Other colleges also recognize that more must be done to produce theater campaign planners. The Air University has revised both intermediate and senior curricula to



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put a greater emphasis on campaign planning; AFSC is doing likewise in phase II. Desert Storm demonstrated the need for trained and experienced campaign planners. The senior colleges must continue to emphasize this important aspect of modern warfare. A JSAMS at the senior level would be a step in this direction. In ten years its impact on theater campaign planning could be just as significant as the intermediate level SAMS courses have been to operational art.

Improvements can also be made in college library systems. A coordinated master plan that allows intermediate and senior college libraries to collaborate in enhancing their collective assets is technically possible. Such an initiative was taken at a MECC meeting in December 1992. Seeking to improve library coordination, the MECC endorsed the concept of a joint knowledge network and gave the Army the lead in studying library interconnectivity. To share service college library assets a multiservice master plan is needed.

Through such a coordinated plan libraries can develop ways to share archives and special collections as well as other programs. The plan should automate service-unique archives, expand current library collections, fund special collections, use multi-media approaches to increase information access, and create service and joint knowledge networks. The payoff for students, faculty, and staff is complete access to archives and collections at all colleges through the power of automation and personal computers.

Recently the defense establishment has been focusing attention on the use of simulations to train leaders. As simulations proliferate, there is a need for the services to work closer together to develop a common denominator that will not only enhance learning but provide a way to improve joint planning. That common denominator should be

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joint doctrine along with the development of joint common teaching scenarios. The Army has relied on common teaching scenarios for years to standardize curricula and learning across its school system. CGSS has developed common tactical teaching scenarios for use throughout the Army school system.

This not only links the education system together but provides better understanding under field conditions where officers of all ranks must work together to plan and execute combat operations. Common teaching scenarios could be adopted in joint education as well. Service colleges could pool their resources to develop common teaching scenarios to allow students at different colleges to plan combat operations under similar conditions (a scenario for Southwest Asia is a place to start). Common teaching scenarios would enhance joint learning and lead to improved teamwork among the services.

Policy change is also required in regard to the Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL). Under current provisions, colleges cannot include faculty positions from their own service on the JDAL. Instead, only officer positions from other services can be placed on

the list. This causes a double standard at service colleges and has an adverse effect on morale. For example, the Joint Systems Division at CGSS is composed of eleven faculty: four Army, three Air Force, two Marines, and two Navy. All the positions except for the Army's are on the JDAL. It is difficult to justify such a disparity in the case of Army officers who work side by side with officers from sister services who get JDAL credit for teaching identical courses. And similar situations prevail at the other service colleges. The JDAL problem also extends to the field and fleet. Like some officers at the colleges, not all positions in joint activities are included on the list. As a result there are officers serving in various joint billets who do not receive joint duty credit for their assignments.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act brought about dramatic changes in joint education. In the past seven years it has revitalized joint curricula, established a system to educate JSOs, and reinforced the attitudes of both students and faculty toward joint operations. Much has been accomplished, and more remains to be done. We should not be content with the status quo but instead should go beyond Goldwater-Nichols. Expanding joint doctrine, streamlining JSO education, implementing a senior level JSAMS, automating library resources, developing joint common teaching scenarios, and revising the JDAL policies are all critical initiatives that can take joint education to higher levels of excellence. The task is to maintain momentum. The initiatives discussed here as well as similar efforts by other service colleges provide an azimuth.

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NOTES

¹ Special Operations Review Group, "Rescue Mission Report" (Washington: Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 1980), also known as the Holloway report.

² U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Panel on Military Education Report*, 101st Cong., 1st Sess., April 1989.

³ Office of the Chairman, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CM 344-90, *Military Education Policy Document* (Washington, May 1990).

⁴ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Army: Status of Recommendations on Officers' Professional Military Education*, NSIAD-91-121BR (March 1991), p. 2.

⁵ Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, SM-189-84, "Joint Professional Military Education Policy Document" (Washington, March 1984).

⁶ Ike Skelton, "JPME: Are We There Yet?," *Military Review*, vol. 72, no. 5 (May 1992), p. 8.